The Spanking Wench
By Yu May and Jezebeth Noir

Chapter 1:
On the Ritual Flogging of Temple Wenches: A Report on Halfling Religious Practices
By John Wilkes

As John Wilkes stepped off the high-speed train, he took a breath of fresh air. Compared to the inner-city, the halfling suburbs were relatively less polluted. He could even catch a glimpse of the yellowish sky between the lines of concrete, high-rise apartment complexes. John adjusted his clerical collar, then tapped a button on his briefcase. With a flurry of clicks and whistles, the briefcase unfolded and reshaped itself into a plastic drone, with the appearance of a toy fairy with dragonfly wings. Impatiently, John tapped the screen that represented the drone's face as it flickered to life. It blinked its eyes once, and when John saw the drone's eyes flash red to indicate it was recording, he cleared his throat and began to speak into his microphone earpiece. "Hello, internet. In my never-ending quest for knowledge on minor cults and religions of the world, I've just arrived at the historic halfling quarter. Aren't the quaint chimneys simply charming?"

In the background behind John Wilkes, one of the "quaint" chimneys belched out thick, black smoke, as if on cue. Automatically, the drone turned its head to capture scenic footage. "In this time of steady spiritual decline, it is important for us to learn all we can about historic religious practices. Today, I've been invited to witness a provincial halfling temple ceremony! Now I know plenty of you have been posting memes in my comment section asking me to cover this halfling religion…" John Wilkes blushed at the memory of some of the memes he'd seen, all of which seemed to involve some variation on halflings merrily spanking a scandalously under-dressed elf, but forced himself to remain focused. "...but there is surprisingly little academic research on this particular group. As usual, *John Wilkes' 'Booth': The Blog for Religious Revival* is at the cutting edge of religious studies! To my knowledge this will be the first recording ever permitted of such a ceremony! I'm expecting to meet the priestess, Lady Mother Bridget Füdlewhopper, any minute now…"

John Wilkes glanced nervously around the empty train station. Sure, violent crime was comparatively low in the halfling suburbs…but only compared to the inner city. Suddenly, a tall, female figure appeared on camera behind him. The drone beeped a warning, but not before the huge woman put a dark hand across his mouth. Wilkes tried to wail, but the woman's grip was unbreakable, and her hand muffled his cries.

"Shush! You're the cleric, right? Don't attract attention!" growled the woman, in a husky, commanding voice. When Wilkes nodded, she released her grip and spun him around roughly to look him in the eyes.

Wilkes swallowed, and glanced the woman up and down. Her eyes were piercing silver, the same color as her hair, and her skin was a midnight shade of blue-black. A dark elf? Her clothes

were sleek, black leather, lined with spikes, like a bandit from one of the many roving motorcycle gangs that plagued the outskirts of the city. Wilkes fumbled for his wallet, then dropped it. “I don’t have much money!”

“No, no! I’m here to escort you to the Temple of the Lady. Priestess Füdlewhopper sent me. Now, get a hold of yourself!” snapped the woman.

Wilkes shut his mouth with a snap. Of course, it could be a lie, but now that he thought of it, dark elves weren’t known for being common bandits. He’d never met a dark elf before, but the ones he’d heard of all had powerful positions in government, corporations, and religious societies around the world. One wasn’t likely to stoop to common thievery. And as he examined her outfit more closely, immediately got the impression that this elf was someone important. “Who are you? What’s your name?”

The dark elf narrowed her eyes. “...My name is unimportant. Follow me, and keep your mouth shut. I don’t want us seen.”

Wilkes stumbled after the dark elf as she glided away. He couldn’t help but notice that she was well muscled for a woman, and that her sleek outfit did nothing to disguise her wide, swaying hips. “Are you with the temple? What’s your role? Do the halflings have any…priestly duties reserved for dark–”

Wilkes felt his question die in his throat as the dark elf flashed him a furious look. He expected her to censure him for asking stupid questions, but the look said more than words ever could. John swallowed and nodded, before following behind her like a sheep. Clearly, the Priestess had sent a powerful emissary to guide him. *“Well, of course they did. After all, I run an important blog!”* thought John.

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The dark elf priestess guided John through the back streets of the suburb, avoiding the main road. Twice, they ducked into an alley to dodge being spotted by local halflings. As he peeked his head around a dumpster, spotting a family of halflings before they disappeared around the corner, Wilkes decided to risk asking another question. “Does your church have a lot of enemies? Are we in danger?”

The dark elf slammed him roughly into the dumpster. “Of course not! But if the locals spot you, it will mean…a lot of annoying questions.” As she uttered the final words, she glanced around, cagily.

“But…I want to talk to the local halflings. The whole reason I’m here is to learn about your religion!”

Something about the way the dark elf looked at him made John think she could easily break him in two if she wanted. Finally, she sighed. “Look, we don’t have much time before the

parishioners arrive for morning service. And all the local halflings who practice the faith will be at the temple anyway, so you'd just be wasting time."

Feeling stupid, Wilkes nodded and allowed himself to be led to an older part of town. As he spotted a magnificent building in red brick, he started to get excited. It reminded him of historic documents of ancient halfling temples, before the industrial revolution wiped out most of the old world. Finally, he felt he was getting to the roots of an authentic, traditional religion! "That's a handsome temple! There's something undeniably 'halfling' about it."

The dark elf raised an eyebrow as she spotted the building John was pointing at, then sighed. "That's the bank, you fool. Here's the temple."

Grabbing Wilkes by the scruff of his clerical collar, the dark elf pulled him into a dark, narrow alley, then slammed a button connected to a dingy garage door. The opener groaned sadly as the garage door lifted, and the dark elf shoved him into a dimly lit, windowless room.

The moment Wilkes straightened up, the top of his skull banged against a low, wooden rafter. He blinked as harsh, artificial lights blared to life, blinding him.

At first, Wilkes thought he was trapped in a dungeon. Then as his vision cleared, he realized with a thrill that this must be an authentic halfling temple! The walls were made of marble, an alabaster sculpture of a goddess stood on a pedestal, and a circular mosaic of glittering gems rested before the goddess!

…But then he noticed the way the light shimmered off the walls, as though they were wrapped in plastic. Still having to bow his head low, John rested a hand against the wall to support himself. It was only waxy wallpaper, imitating the look of genuine marble.

Wilkes started when he heard the dark elf's voice barking at him from behind. When he turned, he found her crouching on her heels, like a tigress ready to pounce. "Well, here you are. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm retiring to my personal quarters to meditate before the service."

Wilkes glanced up to find the low ceiling wasn't finished, and realized he must have cracked his head against one of the exposed support beams from the above floor. Of course, the temple was sized for halfling parishioners. "I…think I need to sit down."

Before he could, the dark elf arose to her feet and gripped his collar again, pulling him close with a single twist of her fist. "Don't you dare! It's an insult to the goddess to be seated in her presence. Just lean against the wall until the priestess–"

The rumble and clank of another garage door interrupted her. Wilkes searched the room for the source of the noise and noticed a second door tucked behind the statue of the goddess, hiding a secret passageway. While the temple's 175 centimeter high ceiling would be considered

roomy for halflings, but cramped for big people, the 100 centimeter high tunnel looked claustrophobic even for halflings.

With a series of grating clicks, the jankety garage door stuck in place. A male halfling, half-hidden behind the garage door, cursed. Then he landed a sharp kick to the bottom of the door, and it sprang to life, rising out of the way. A gruff-looking halfling with a mustache and cap entered the temple, pushing a janitor's cart. "Bleedin' door never works."

A middle-aged halfling woman followed him, wearing a simple, flowing robe and a nylon cord across her shoulders. She rolled her eyes as she examined the offending garage door. "Yes, if only the temple employed *someone*, whose sole job was to keep it fixed."

"I told you already, I'm a handyman, not a temple guard…wait a minute…" The handyman froze as he caught the halfling woman's wry smile. His face turning red, the handyman pulled a spray can of lubricant from his belt and examined the door. "It ain't sticking on account of me not tending to it. The door sticks on account of it being over 50 years old. Something you might be able to appreciate, Priestess!"

At the mention of the word "priestess" Wilkes examined the middle-aged halfling woman and finally recognized her. It was Lady Mother Bridget Füdlewhopper, though the profile pic he'd seen of her from the temple's "Contact Us" page was probably 20 years out of date.

Wilkes tapped his drone to make sure it was awake and still recording. Then he bumped his head again as he stumbled forward to shake the priestess' hand. "Ma'dam Füdlewhopper! It's a pleasure to finally meet you. I'm John Wilkes, the writer who reached out to you. I was wondering if you could answer a few questions I have about–OUCH!"

The priestess narrowed her eyes, and ignored his hand. "Oh, it's you. The blogger. Please, call me Bridget. That 'ma'dam' nonsense makes me sound like an old lady. Mr. Sandiman, fetch me the remote! I'll need to breeze through the Pixiepoint presentation for welcoming first-time visitors before the service starts."

Sandiman, the handyman, did not look away from his work at the garage door. "The remote's taped up behind the statue of the Blessed Lady. Fetch it yourself!"

Bridget sniffed, then reached behind the pillar of the halfling goddess: "The Lady." It was a charming image of a merry-looking halfling woman wearing a laurel crown and simple robe, holding a bundle of birches in her hands. The flogging implement appeared to have been painted realistically, to resemble real-life wooden sticks. Though now that John could get a better look at it, he realized the image of the goddess was made of cheap plaster, not alabaster, and the circular mosaic before it was made from simple cobblestone, not gemstones.

Cursing, Bridget fumbled with the remote, and a dusty overhead projector popped out of the ceiling. “Where is the temple wench? We can’t greet our ‘distinguished guest’ properly without her.”

John nodded, stupidly. “Ah! I get to meet one of your elven flagellants?”

Sandiman finally turned away from his work. “Eh, flatu-whats?”

Bridget sighed. “He means a spanking wench, Sandiman.”

Sandiman shrugged. “Oh, it sounded like he said, ‘flatulence.’ Just to warn you, the Lady of Laughter considers that sort of thing to be the lowest form of comedy.”

Bridget patted Wilkes’ hand, as though he was an exceptionally large, exceptionally stupid child. “No one calls them ‘flagellants’ anymore, dear. We don’t like using archaic terms for temple wenches. Gives them ideas above their station.”

John turned to find his dark elven guide, and found her cowering in the corner, nearly invisible outside the path of blaring, fluorescent light aimed at the idol of the goddess. “And you, ma’am? Will you be…assisting with the punishment?”

“Nooooo…” whimpered the dark elf.

Bridget finally spotted the dark elf. “Ah, there’s the spanking wench! What are you doing skulking in the corner? Get over here, and assume the position!”

As the dark elf shuffled out of her corner, John noticed she had to hunch over in a permanent bow, thanks to the low ceiling. She danced a little on the balls of her feet, as though each step was painful for her.

Wilkes blinked. “Um, what spanking wench? This is…come to think of it, I never caught your name?”

As Wilkes tried to meet her eyes, the dark elf stared at the ground.

Bridget snickered. “What are you talking about? She has no name. She’s just a spanking wench.”

As he finally put two and two together, John felt like a schoolboy who’d been forced to wear a dunce cap. Of course, in all the memes, halflings spanked elven maidens. But the dark elf’s poise and grace had been so mesmerizing, it hadn’t occurred to him that she might be the one on the receiving end.

Finally, Bridget found the button she was looking for on the remote. The overhead projector flickered to life, and words in bold, garish letters, shone onto the white wall above the idol: *"Welcome to Our Temple: Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about the Lady of Love, the Lady of Laughter, and the Lady of Lashes, But Were Too Afraid to Ask!"* As Bridget looked back and forth from the sheepish dark elf to the confused blogger, she smiled knowingly. "Ah, how adorable. What lies have you been telling our guest, wench?"

The dark elf tensed, then reached behind her back to shield her ample bottom. "I didn't tell him any lies, honest!

"And what are you wearing? That's not your temple uniform. Have you been stealing from the temple alms box?"

The elf's eyes went wide. "No, no, no! This is just…an outfit I picked up for when I'm taking walks outdoors, not when I'm on duty."

"Sandiman, did you let her have that? Temple wenches aren't supposed to own any property without approval from a Priestess. "

The handyman finished greasing the garage door, and slammed it shut. "Eh? Can't say I recall. I suppose I've seen her throwing some sort of jacket on when she's out for a walk."

"Then you should have informed me. It's my prerogative as this temple's priestess to permit any changes to the spanking wench's wardrobe."

"I ain't a temple guard, so it ain't my job to tell the wench what she can wear, one way or t'other! And even if it were, you ain't been here to ask for a week. Ain't my fault you're off at other temples all the time."

Bridget sniffed, then with a glance at the statue of her goddess, took a deliberate, calming breath. Then she spun on her heels to glare at the dark elf, like a stern mother. "Wench, take off that foolish outfit immediately."

Frowning, the dark elf clutched at the collar of her leather jacket, her voice cracking. "But…I didn't steal it! I only–"

Bridget clicked her tongue. "Goodness, do I have to *remind* you of your vows to the Goddess?"

The effect was instant. The dark elf unzipped her jacket and stepped out of her biker pants. Although the dark elf was indeed well-muscled, Wilkes realized her tight leather uniform had also served to disguise a layer of puppy fat.

Then Wilkes noticed she was wearing a thin sash in place of a bra. Her only undergarments were a thin cord with a narrow, rectangular flap of cloth covering her front and behind, like an

oriental fundoshi. Both articles of clothing were white, with soft accents of vermillion, contrasting sharply against the dark elf's blue-black skin. The negligee did almost nothing to hide the elf's bouncy, blueish buttocks.

Gingerly, the dark elf dropped her clothes on the ground, but when she heard Priestess Bridget clear her throat and tap her foot, the frightened wench quickly dropped to her knees, folded the clothes neatly, and offered them up.

Wilkes practically choked at the sight of the nameless, supplicant dark elf before him. "Are…are you going to punish her?"

Bridget hooted as she accepted the neatly-folded, forbidden leather outfit. "Punish her? Oh no, 'punishment' is such a cruel word. The Lady commands us that a wench need only be tamed with kindness. Of course, we do *spank* the wenches plenty. But that's their sacred, joyful duty. After all, spanking is not a punishment, but rather an eternal reward…for a spanking wench, at least. Sandiman! Be a dear, and put these clothes with the implements. And fetch the wooden horse while you're at it. I think the wench would benefit from it immensely!"

Sandiman was so pleased at the mention of the wooden horse, he forgot to complain about his job description. He sang as he disappeared down the narrow passageway. "By the Lady, we haven't used the wooden horse in an age, and a day! What fun! A spanking bench, for the spanking wench!"

The dark elf's lip trembled. "No! Please, not the horsey! Not now!"

Before, the dark elf had given Wilkes the impression of being an ancient, beautiful queen: centuries old, yet untouched by time. Now the same elf looked like a terrified brat, sentenced to a spanking for stealing sweets.

Bridget clicked her tongue, and snapped her fingers. With a flourish, the white nylon cords draped around the priestess' shoulders began to glow softly, then floated lazily in the air between her and the terrified wench. "Don't worry, we're not going to use the horse now. We'll save it for later, to give the parishioners a proper show. Right now, I'll have you assume the standard position before the altar."

Powered by a magic spell, the two cords began to bind the dark elf automatically. Wilkes recognized it as a common trick rope, the sort of everyday magic even commoners could afford. One cord tied itself around each of the dark elf's wrists, the other around each of her ankles, leaving the captive elf enough wiggle room to move freely. The wench moaned with humiliation, then crawled on her hands and knees to kneel on the cobblestone mosaic before the idol of the goddess.

As the elf lowered her head to the ground and lifted her bountiful backside high into the air, it dawned on Wilkes that the mosaic circle represented an altar, and the sacrifice being offered up

on the altar…was the wench's ass. Across the elf's plump posterior, he could make out faded red marks in thin, straight lines, all criss-crossing over one another in a fiery pattern.

The priestess climbed up a carved step at the base of the idol's pillar and snatched up the birch bundle in the goddess' hand. Wilkes felt stupid for not noticing it before. Of course, the birches were always handy when it was time for a flogging, as if the Goddess was merrily offering them to her faithful followers with a wry wink.

Bridget delivered the first whack with the birch bundle, before fumbling with the remote to click to the next slide of her presentation. "Welcome, guest, to the Temple of the Lady. Here, we honor the Lady of Love! The Lady of Laughter! The Lady of Lashes!" Bridget delivered three firm whacks to the dark elf's behind to punctuate each of these sacred titles for the goddess. The elf grunted and hummed, but seemed resolved not to break down crying.

Bridget clicked to the next slide, which depicted a heroic looking halfling soldier wielding a sword. Kneeling at his feet was a dark elf wearing a flowing red cape, and little else. "Now, why don't we begin at the beginning? …Our church was founded by halflings under the protection of the Goddess, who charged the first disciples to punish some silly dark elf who had been getting into mischief…"

"Wait, is that supposed to be the Hero of Legend?"

Bridget swelled her chest. "You are surprisingly astute. The Hero of Legend is our first patron saint."

"Then that dark elf must be the Red Mistress…the sorceress?"

"Hmm? Oh, I suppose that was one of her fancy titles before the Hero put her in her proper place. We prefer to call her 'The Red-Bottomed Missy.' Or just 'Missy' for short…"

Bridget swung the birch bundle across the spanking wench's backside with such force, the amazonian dark elf's whole body rocked forward from the impact. She winced, but only emitted a low groan.

Bridget clicked the button on her remote control. "Next slide…"

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Once upon a time, the spanking wench had been the CEO of the Megwandir Family Conglomerate, which allowed her to enjoy every possible pleasure wealth and power could provide, until she grew bored. She herself had been the eldest surviving matriarch of the Megwandir family, but she had renounced her name when she entered the service of the halfling Goddess. In the years since, she had even come to think of herself as the spanking wench, even in her most private moments. Of course, she hadn't forgotten her name, it just seemed

more fitting, especially when she was meditating before the Lady of Love, the Lady of Laughter, and the Lady of Lashes…her Lady.

At the crack of dawn, a few hours before John Wilkes' train was due to arrive at the halfling quarter, the wench found herself seated before the Lady. Well, not quite seated. The temple had provided her with a wedge-shaped "seat" for her meditation, but it had been deliberately fashioned so that when the wench sat on it, it angled her bottom upward, to provide a better view for any visitors to the temple. Furthermore, the cushion of the seat was a bed of stinging nettles. So, the wench had to constantly float her bottom a few inches above her seat, before exhaustion forced her to rest her weight on the stinging leaves. After a few seconds, the nettles would begin to itch, forcing her to raise her bottom, and the process would begin all over again.

Sometimes, the wench reflected on her past life, sometimes she wept and prayed as she considered her present plight, and other times, she considered her future: a millennia of voluntary slavery as a spanking wench. And after death, her only eternal reward would be to continue her service as a spanking wench in the heavenly chambers: to be spanked by the Goddess herself.

Of course, the wench had chosen this life willingly. It hadn't been easy to become a spanking wench. The High Priestess, and her council, rejected most applicants, and all but the most determined of dark elf maidens were eliminated by the screening process: which included, but was not limited to, giving the would-be wenches merciless floggings, to warn them precisely what they had in store.

The wench blushed as she remembered her training regime, all of which had been televised as a reality TV game show by the First Halfling Temple: *Who Wants to Be a Spanking Wench?* (Halflings are nothing if not creative entrepreneurs, with a knack for show business.)

Nevertheless, the wench had persisted, leaving behind her life as a literal girlboss, leaving behind all the prestige, privilege, and power that came with the Megwandir family name. There were days that the wench yearned to receive the long, hard spanking she always wanted, from the Lady herself. There were even nights, to her own horror, when the wench dreamed of being whipped to death.

Sometimes she dreamed of receiving that divine retribution, alone in her cramped cell behind the altar, and longed to touch herself. But every night, the handyman would secure her bonds tightly, to deny her the opportunity to do anything about her wet dreams. For the first few years of her service, the wench had been kept in a constant, agonizing, wonderful state of endless titillation, without release.

But today, the wench was bored. She hadn't been spanked properly in days, except for a quick caning a parishioner had given her last night.

Ideally, the tradition for the spanking wenches, going back to the founding of the religion, was that their bottoms were always to be kept an even shade of red, for as long as they lived.

Except for the handyman, the local cabbage merchant lady was the only daily visitor the wench could expect at the halfling temple. Even Lady Mother Bridget Füdlewhopper only visited once a week, since she had to work at several provincial temples. There wasn't even a proper temple guard to keep the wench from attempting to escape. It wasn't as though the wench wanted to escape, but still, it was nice to know you were wanted!

To occupy her mind, the wench fantasized about how, assuming she had a temple guard, she might make a daring escape attempt. How fun it would be to dart away from the adorable little halfling, only for him to catch her in the end, and spank her for her trouble. Not a punishment spanking of course, but only a loving reminder to gently guide the errant wench back to her proper station in life. The wench purred at the thought, and pressed her weight down against the stinging nettles, trying to perfect the illusion.

However, as the wench broke her concentration on the statue of the Lady and examined her backside, she started to have second thoughts about wanting to be spanked. After all, Bridget had flogged her mercilessly only last week. Faint silver scars were still visible across her bottom. (It was well known that dark elves were gifted with remarkable healing abilities, though the jury was still out whether their hindquarters were especially gifted).

The wench pouted. It seemed she was either being spanked far too harshly, or not nearly enough.

Sometimes, the wench liked to play the role of a whiny crybaby during her frequent ritual spankings. Pretending to mewl and sob was one way to break the tedium. But last week, Bridget had been determined to make a lasting impression on the wench.

The wench tried to think back to the cruel beating she'd experienced a week ago. She remembered being tied securely to a spanking bench, and the howls of laughter at her expense as the temple-goers watched her futile struggle. She remembered how she'd howled and roared, but had refused to cry.

If only she could hold back her tears, at least she could have been spared the final indignity of hearing additional mockery. But the willow cane had finally broken her resolve, and after the first two tears fell, she had broken down into open sobs. "Please, let me go! I can't take anymore!"

It wasn't that she was afraid of being spanked. That part of the job had been what attracted her interest in the first place. In fact, the wench prided herself on her ability to take a beating. It was more the humiliation of being mocked that wore at her…though it was also nice to be the center of attention. Pain, she could take. Insults, she could bear. Exposure, she could endure. But something about the combination of all three made her break down crying, like a little girl.

Bridget had paused the caning. The wench had been tempted to demand to see the High Priestess, and petition to be released from her service to the Lady. But at the last moment, the wench had thought better of it. She had learned long ago, it never did any good to make demands and empty threats, and she didn't want to be mocked for her faithlessness and cowardice. Bridget had gently patted the wench's bottom, before adding. "You can't take anymore? Can you imagine how tired my arm is getting? You don't hear me complaining!"

Then the caning began again, and long after the wench thought she could not possibly endure another stroke, she was forced to endure them anyway. It was the first time since she'd joined the temple that the spanking wench began to have second thoughts about her vocation.

Remembering how she had once been in charge of meeting out strict discipline, the former matriarch fumed. That punishment had been far too harsh! When the dark elf had been a free woman, and a mother, she had never hesitated to punish her daughter with a good, hard spanking. But never in her wildest dreams had she imagined using such sadistic punishments as the halflings regularly meted out to their temple wenches…not on fellow dark elf family members, at least.

Sure, she might subject enemies of the family to torture, especially during the old, wild days, before the race of men had raised up their great cities across all four corners of the world.

Torture was all to common, back in the good old days. But that was mostly for business, not just pleasure. And why break an enemy with something as blunt as physical pain, when it was so much more elegant to outsmart them? What could be more punishing for an enemy than to live on, knowing they had been beaten soundly at their own game?

Then the wench corrected herself. Of course, for halflings, spanking wasn't thought of as a method of punishment at all, at least not for a spanking wench.

As the itching sensation from the stinging nettles built to a sharp burn, the wench squeaked and lifted herself up off her cushion.

Looking up at the goddess, the wench sighed, contentedly. Of course, if she really, truly wanted to leave, she could.

If she ran away, the police would catch her eventually, and drag her back to the temple, but sooner or later, she might escape permanently. Generally speaking, slavery was outlawed by the state, but forms of voluntary and religious slavery had been grandfathered into the law. A runaway slave was viewed like a runaway child: they were the legal wards of their owner, whether secular or religious.

Then again, running away meant living life as an outlaw. Far better to make her appeal to the High Priestess' Council, and ask to be released from her Oath of Service to the Goddess.

Sure, she might be whipped to within an inch of her life to discourage her from recanting the faith, but in the end, the Council didn't want any dark elven maids to serve as spanking wenches unless they were committed to the vocation.

Demanding a hearing with the High Priestess was the simpler solution to her dilemma, but by no means was it any easier. It would probably take anywhere from weeks to decades for her case to be heard, and she could expect plenty of ferocious spankings in the meantime, to gently encourage her to abandon her plans to become an apostate of the church.

The nameless wench reflected the tales she'd heard over the years of the first spanking wench: the former Queen known as the Red Mistress, who was fated to be remembered only as "the red-bottomed missy" by halflings. Some stories said that the first wench was accidentally flogged to death, while others claimed that her lust for pain became so great, she finally requested that fate of her own free will. Others said that the red-bottomed missy finally succeeded in freeing herself from the control of the halfling temple, or was cast out by the council, only to spend the rest of her days seeking reentry into the temple's services as a spanking wench.

The halflings made it hard for any elf to become a temple wench because they only wanted to accept true believers, those ready to commit for life. And every temple wench knew that, even if she did manage to secure her freedom, she'd never be allowed back into communion with the halflings. In the eyes of the Lady, such an unfaithful elf would be forever lost: a spanking would do her no good.

As she settled her weight fully back down on the nettles, the wench felt the leaves impress into the puppy fat of her lower cheeks and thighs, and the fiery prickling sensation returned. Tears welled in the wenches eyes as she fixed her eyes on the Goddess. "Oh, my Lady, please, I do want to be a good spanking wench. Help me learn to be thankful for my spankings, and endure them. Amen!"

Her reverie was interrupted by halfling curses as the handyman struggled to open the sticky overhead door that led to the hidden passage and the wench's cell. "Confusticate and bebother these doors!"

The wench sighed. "Morning, Master Sandiman. I don't suppose you'd be willing to give me a quick thrashing? My backside is barely red anymore."

Sandiman harrumphed as he jiggled the door. "I'm no temple guard, wench. My job's to fix what's broke around here, not wear out my arm tanning your hide. If I have something I want to ask of the Goddess, you'll be the first to know."

The wench lifted her hips and wiggled them, teasingly. "Oh, are you afraid your arm will give out? Or that your prayers won't please her? It must be hard, asking for anything from a Goddess who prizes wit and whimsy above all else."

Sandiman bit his lip. Later that night, he was sure he could come up with a devastating retort, but at the moment his mind was blank. So he instead busied himself on the stuck door.

He jumped when he heard another garage door opening, but not the one he was working on. Priestess Bridget hustled into the temple from the alleyway, waving her staff. “Sandiman! We have a problem! Oh, fiddlesticks, just look at the wench’s bottom. It’s not red at all! Sandiman, why haven’t you tended to it?”

Before Sandiman could answer, the wench perfectly imitated his working class halfling accent. “He ain’t a temple guard! He’s a handyman!”

Sandiman nodded as he fiddled with a loose screw on the door. “Yeah, I ain’t a temple guard, I’m a–” He did a double take at the wench, blushed furiously, then pretended to work on the door.

Bridget landed a firm clap across one of the wench’s lower butt-cheeks. This caught the wench by surprise, but with a sharp intake of breath, she resisted the urge to flinch.

Bridget circled around to wave a finger in the wench’s face. “None of that. You’re getting ideas above your station. Clearly, you haven’t been given enough attention. So I’ll just have to remind you of your proper place. Assume the position.”

Obediently, the wench leaned forward on her hands and knees. But as she lifted her bottom, she made a point of resting her chin casually on her folded hands, as if she was a playful kitten. “It’s a pity I don’t have a proper temple guard, nor a priestess, who can remind me more often!”

Bridget flashed the wench a furious look. Because so many minor halfling temples were dwindling in membership, Priestess Bridget was forced to act as a circuit preacher, traveling from suburb to suburb to officiate for multiple congregations. All “proper temples” were able to afford their own dedicated Priestess, and sometimes a temple guard. Furthermore, the Temple of the High Priestess kept 11 spanking wenches, and also managed to keep all 11 bottoms an even shade of crimson at all times, according to tradition. This was a sore point for Lady Mother Bridget, and both of them knew it.

Bridget scooped up the birch bundle which was always kept ready-at-hand, cradled in the hands of the Goddess’ statue. Amongst halflings, the “gift of gab” was considered a sacred gift. It wasn’t enough to simply pray to the Goddess. And there were only two things which the Goddess considered a proper offering: a well spanked elven backside (preferably that of a dark elf), and witty jests and riddling talk.

During her training for the cloth, Bridget had learned a few classic one-liners and basic joke writing, just enough to “warm up” both the crowd, and the spanking wench’s behind. This was

usually enough for day-to-day services. But truly pleasing the Goddess required creative thinking: to tell her a joke she hadn't heard before.

Bridget tapped the wench's bottom a few times, signaling that they were about to begin. "Really, wench, you should remember the words of our Lady: 'When someone strikes you upon one cheek–" At this, Bridget landed a nasty stroke across the wench's right bottom cheek, "Turn to her the other also!" Bridget landed a second, back-handed stroke across the wench's left bottom cheek.

With each blow, ripples traveled through the flesh of the dark elf's dumpy derriere. Hiding her discomfort, the wench glanced over her shoulder. "Hmm, now that you mention it, I think I've heard that one before. A few times, actually!"

Because spanking was never officially used as a punishment by the church, there was no reason the wench couldn't sass, nor tease, nor interrupt during the service. Some halfling theologians even argued this was beneficial, as it encouraged parishioners to think on their feet during the offering. Nevertheless, it always annoyed Bridget when their wench felt the need to steal the show. And if Bridget's witticisms were not always up to scratch, she was sure she could make it up to the goddess by offering her a particularly well-spanked wench.

This time, Bridget struck the wench across both her cheeks at once. "And yet, the lesson refuses to sink in. If you were half as clever as you think you are, you wouldn't have to be *gently reminded* so often."

The wench hissed, refusing to scream, and scrambled to think of a comeback. The smarting sensation was making it hard for her to concentrate. "Well, maybe you're not as *funny* as you think you are, Lady Mother Füdlewhopper."

Bridget grinned as she landed another stroke with the birch, this time holding her arm low and angling upward to catch the wench across her lower bottom, where her chubby cheeks met her tubby thighs. The holy halfling couldn't have asked for a better set up if she'd written it herself. "Wench, if I'm half as funny as I *think* I am, I'm a riot."

Sandiman snickered, then snorted. Pleased with herself, Bridget decided it was time to wrap up the emergency, last-minute spanking. She landed another spank to get the wench's attention, and began again. "Now, wench, if it were up to me, I'd punish you severely for showing such *cheek*–" A sound lash punctuated the word "cheek." The wench grimaced, biting her tongue.

Bridget watched carefully, knowing full well that the wench was trying to tough out her "gentle reminder" without making a sound. "But, most fortunately for *your* butt…" Another spank. "...it's not up to me to punish you. My only task is to guide you safely back to the loving lap of the Lady, where you belong…"

For a moment Bridget paused, and the wench looked up longingly at the Goddess, remembering all her earlier doubts, and her prayer that morning. Then Bridget took the wench by surprise with another spank. "...So that she can bend you over her knee and spank you for all eternity. Can't say I see the appeal, personally, but I suppose you get what's coming to you…in the *end!"* A firm strike punctuated the word "end." The wench had to swallow her scream, and clenched her fists.

Sandiman sighed. "Really, Lady Mother. You're using puns? Isn't that the lowest form of comedy?"

Bridget shook her head, then delivered a final, reverberating spank. "No, sir! That would be slapstick." Desperate to resist the urge to cry, the wench crossed her eyes and pursed her lips, making a rather absurd expression. The sight of this was enough to crack up Sandiman. He slapped his knees as he fought for breath. The wench felt two tears damp her eyes, and quickly pressed her face into the cobblestone mosaic, trying to wipe them away without making it obvious.

As Bridget examined the wench's red-tinted bottom, she wasn't confident that the spanking was long enough to serve a proper offering for the goddess. But they were short on time, and she determined that it would have to suffice. After putting away the birch bundle, Bridget squeezed the wench lightly under her chin and lifted up her face. Sure, the wench's eyelashes were slightly damp, but the dark elf's refusal to cry always made Bridget nervous. Last week was the first time she'd managed to produce tears, but Bridget knew that underneath the bratty act, the dark elf still had a stubborn, unbroken spirit.

Bridget shook her head. It was not as if the halfling cared for the dark elf's soul, but she felt it was her sacred duty to free the temple wench from her sinful pride. And Bridget knew that humiliation was just as important of a tool as pain when it came to taming temple wenches. "You haven't put on mascara? That won't do. The children love it when the wench's tears make the mascara run down her cheeks."

Bridget pulled a small jar of mascara from her purse and began to apply a heavy coat to the wench's eyelashes. With her bottom still in the air, and her chin still pressed against the cold stone floor, the dark elf glowered. She looked as dangerous as she possibly could, given her position.

Satisfied with her makeup job, Bridget fumbled through her purse to find her spare hair ribbons and bows. "And two pigtails would be perfect for our little piggie! Do you think you could squeal like a pig during the service? That always gets a chuckle from the butchers in the audience…"

As Bridget tried to pull the wench's hair into pigtails, the dark elf recoiled at the sight of the frilly, pink bows and pulled her hair away, lifting her bottom higher as she inched backwards. The wench didn't *quite* leave her position, which would have been a serious breach of protocol, but she came within an inch of doing so. "No! I don'wanna!"

Bridget froze, realizing that the wench was testing her boundaries. Squirming and resisting wasn't exactly discouraged, as he halflings found it funny to watch the wenches writhe. But when a wench disobeyed a priestess, the Goddess commanded that they be gently corrected, with a flogging. But they were running short on time, and both of them knew it. Before Bridget could decide how to handle the situation, her phone buzzed. "Fiddle faddle! It's that big, stupid blogger fellow again! Mr. Sandiman, would you be a dear, and meet him at the station?"

Giving up on ever getting the overhead door to work, Sandiman slammed it shut, and decided to call it a job well done. "I ain't a messenger boy…"

"I'm a handyman!" said the handyman, the priestess, and the wench all at once.

Bridget rounded on the wench, wanting to thrash the dark elf to within an inch of her life. But the priestess remembered her catechism classes as a youngster, and the legend that the first temple wench had accidentally been flogged to death by overzealous halflings. The story's authenticity was hotly debated, but all halfling Priestesses learned the story to teach them the value of self-control (and the charming stupidity of any elf foolish enough to choose the life of a spanking wench). "Wench, you will fetch the big person for me. I'm sure he'll have lots of perfectly obvious questions for you about your duties as a spanking wench."

The wench frowned. "Me? But I have to be here for the service!"

Bridget beamed, then pulled her personal, wooden hairbrush out of her purse. She relished at the sight of the dark elf eyeing the implement, both knowing what was coming. "Then you'd better trod along! Dismissed!"

The priestess landed a firm pop, and the dark elf hopped to her feet. Forgetting herself, the wench ran to the alley-side exit, clutching her bottom, kicking up her feet, and stooping to avoid cracking her noggin on the low ceiling. The last thing she heard was derisive laughter as she ducked out of the temple. Her face burning, the dark elf reached behind the dumpster, seeking the leather uniform she'd secretly stolen from a pile of thrift clothing for a donation drive. She remembered how intensely she'd desired a spanking the moment she stole it, and how she hadn't cared, wanting the jacket more. She wanted to wear something other than her absurd temple outfit during the rare moments when she was allowed to roam free.

Usually, she enjoyed listening to the halfling's jovial jeers and jests that greeted her wherever she went. But for once, just once, she wanted to remember what it was like to not be a temple wench.

Once upon a time, but not so long ago for a dark elf, she had worn a similar outfit while riding her motorcycle in the desert wilderness that surrounded the concrete jungle of the inner city. At that point in her life, she could easily have afforded a limousine and an escort of armored trucks.

But something about the freedom of the open road had helped her take her mind off the family business, for a little while.

Wincing as she pulled the tight leather pants across her aching ass, the wench thought about the questions she'd have to face when she met this stranger at the train station.

"Let him think whatever he wants!" she murmured.

Pulling up her collar, the dark elf made her way to the train station, careful to avoid notice from any local halflings. Usually, she enjoyed hearing the whistles and good-natured teasing as they spotted the local spanking wench out and about. Even though the jokes were all at her expense, she had to admit halflings had a gift for crafting perfect insults. But today, she didn't feel like hearing it.

End of Chapter 1

Chapter 2:
Full Video: Temple Wench Interviewed (And Spanked!)
By John Wilkes

John Wilkes swallowed as he watched the once-proud dark elf whimper and tremble, her lip quivering, her bottom jiggling as the Priestess finished what was apparently only a “warm up spanking.” He looked back up at the Pixiepoint presentation, which featured a cheesy clip art image of a dark elf bent over in the exact same position as the present-day temple wench before him. “So, you do all this to honor the Red Mistress, the first temple wench?”

Bridget shook her head. “Such a simple question, fitting for such a simple questioner! Of course there’s no need to honor the red-bottomed missy. She was only a spanking wench, after all.”

Wilkes scratched his head as he examined his notes. “But wasn’t she a powerful queen, gifted in dark magic? Didn’t she battle the Hero of Legend himself?”

Bridget shrugged. “I suppose. But that was before she became a spanking wench. And really, why should we remember or honor the deeds of some dark queen anyway, just because she had a not-quite-invincible army, and got ideas above her station?”

Not quite understanding, Wilkes glanced at his camera drone, but it had no answers for him. “So, the Goddess spared the Red Mistress’ life…”

“But not her bottom!” interjected Mr. Sandiman, with surprising cheerfulness. His voice echoed from within the dark, cramped chamber. There was a sound of wood scraping against concrete, and Sandiman began to drag what looked like a wooden sculpture of a horse’s ass, before its wooden tail snagged against the low hanging garage door.

“Dagnabbit!” Stamping his feet, Sandiman shoved the wooden horse back into the dark tunnel and began to busy himself with the 50-year-old garage door again.

Wilkes nodded, “...And that’s why you punish the temple wenches with flogging…so that their bottoms forever remain a shade of red, like the Red Mistress?”

Bridget sighed, slapping her forehead with the palm of one hand, and the wench’s backside with the palm of her other hand. “It’s not about punishment. It’s about kindness! Can’t you see that without our temple, this silly spanking wench would not be getting the spankings she so clearly needs?”

“But…why does she need so much spanking? What did she do wrong?”

Bridget continued to slap the temple wench’s upturned rear end and she explained the finer points of the halfling faith to the slow-witted blogger. “Wrong? This wench does plenty of things wrong. She’s not a very good spanking wench if you ask me. Always fussing and putting on airs.

But even if she were a perfectly behaved spanking wench, she'd still need spankings just the same. If the Goddess didn't want her to be spanked, why did she create her to be a spanking wench? Really, I don't see why you're so fixated on the spanking wench herself. The heart of our theology is in the nature of the Goddess, in her love of laughter, and in sharpening our minds in her service! If you look at my next slide–"

Bridget froze as her phone alarm buzzed again. "Oh, nicknacks! We spent all our time discussing spanking wenches, and service is about to start. I'll have to ask you to go stand in the corner. I'd offer you a seat, but it's considered rude to sit in the presence of the Goddess. Does that make sense? Would you like me to use shorter words?"

Not sure if he was the butt of some strange joke, Wilkes politely declined the Priestess' offer and made his way to the corner. As he tried to straighten up, and was forced to hunch, he felt oddly like he'd been sent to time out by an impatient pre-school teacher. Bridget busied herself by pulling the dark elf's silvery hair into two absurd, childish pigtails, complete with pink ribbons and bows. Looking miserable, the wench scrunched her lips into the shape of an "M."

The first few congregants began to arrive as the Priestess made final preparations. Wilkes spotted a halfling family of a father, mother, and a bright eyed little girl with spectacles. They were followed by a stern elderly halfling woman wearing a shawl, nearly as stout as a dwarf. A handsome young halfling man arrived next, scribbling furiously in a journal. Not paying attention, he trod on the elderly woman's shawl, and when she glared at him he bowed low, offering a thousand pardons, until she shushed him.

Over the next few minutes, a few small groups of halflings milled into the garage/temple. Wilkes thought some of them looked like typical halfling business folk (halflings were famously over-represented in middle management positions in the corporate world). Others seemed roughly dressed, as though they'd been on the dusty road recently.

Bridget kept looking at her phone, and Wilkes wondered if she was waiting for more congregants to arrive before beginning service. Finally, Bridget gave up and put her phone away, then raised her priestly staff high. "Fellow Good Folk, we gather together to honor the Lady of Love, the Lady of Laughter, the Lady of Lashes. We will soon honor her with our words. Let us first honor her with our silence."

As if on cue, the hastily repaired overhead door behind the idol clanked open with an obnoxious roar, and Sandiman the handyman dragged out what Wilkes could only assume was the spanking bench.

Sure enough, the bench was roughly shaped like a wooden horse, but the legs were solid and carved geometrically. The seat of the bench was curved like a horse's back, with a saddle-shaped cushion. But the exposed wood looked weathered and splintered, and attached to one end of the bench was a garish, cartoonish, wooden horse head, complete with an absurd painted face. Sandiman scraped it across the concrete floor towards the cobble stone mosaic.

Beaming with delight, Bridget patted the temple wench's bottom almost playfully to chase her off the mosaic, and the horse was dragged into place before the goddess.

"Yay! I love watching the spanking wench ride the horsey!" squealed the little halfling girl from the audience.

The wench turned on the Priestess, imploring. "No, Lady Mother! Not the spanking horse!"

As the Priestess tut-tutted, and the wench fussed, Wilkes heard a female voice whisper softly in his ear. "What an actress. She's really hamming it up, isn't she?"

Wilkes barely stopped himself from squealing. Somehow, a woman had snuck up on him in the corner, where the blinding light from the fluorescent bulb didn't quite reach. Then it occurred to Wilkes that the woman was shorter than him, which was strange because she was looking down on him, but she wasn't nearly short enough to be a halfling. Then he remembered that he was hunching over to avoid hitting his head, then straightened up to talk to the woman, but forgot he had been hunching over to avoid hitting his head, and cracked his skull on the beam of the ceiling. The elderly halfling woman in the shawl gave him a death stare, before turning her attention back on the whiny spanking wench being led to her doom.

Hissing, Wilked rubbed the crown of his skull, and felt a rising goose egg. "Who are you? What are you talking about?"

The woman shook her head, her face hidden in shadow beneath her hood. She was just short enough she could walk around the cramped room without cracking her head. "I'm a guest, like you. The priestess was kind enough to invite me to witness one of these flogging ceremonies. I read your blog. It was most…entertaining."

Wilkes puffed up his chest, but before he could turn the conversation to his blog, which was his favorite subject, the cloaked woman spoke over him. "As for your second question, what I'm talking about is that spanking wench's performance. Do you think the halflings buy it, or are they all in on the joke?"

Wilkes turned his attention back to the wench, who was now gingerly setting herself onto the spanking horse, as though she was trying to avoid touching it. "Please, don't make me! I'll get splinters!" whimpered the wench.

"What joke? She's clearly terrified, the poor thing."

Before Wilkes could argue his point further, a light blared on his face, burning his retinas. As he stammered apologies for interrupting the service, he heard Lady Mother Bridget's booming voice projecting from the other side of the room. "Good Folk, today we welcome among us an outsider. As you can all plainly see, he is a most distinguished scholar, who has taken an

academic interest in our Lady. I humbly suggest we allow him to make the first offering to the Lady of Lashes, as our Guest of *Honor.* Isn't our wench a lucky gal?"

There was a tittering of laughter from the congregation, and Wilkes felt himself inexplicably drawn forward from his corner, somehow feeling embarrassed and flattered all at once. "Oh, I really couldn't! I don't know what to say?"

Wilkes was about to discuss several amusing anecdotes related to his career as a blogger before he noticed Bridget offering him the bundle of birches from the sculpture, gesturing helpfully at the dark elf's upturned bottom. "Roast her well!"

Wilkes blanched as he accepted the bundle, already feeling sorry for the wench. As he glanced down at the nameless dark elf, he noticed Sandiman binding her wrists in place against the two front legs of the horse with two leather thongs connected to the horse's feet. "Um, why are you tying her up so tightly?"

Sandiman didn't bother to look up from his work. "To keep her from bucking off, of course!"

As if in answer, the wench squealed, pulling up and away, before the restraints caught her wrists. Wilkes noticed two splinters of exposed wood had pricked her, one near her tummy, another against her breasts, which rested against the horse's neck. Sandiman planted a playful swat on the wench's bottom. "None of that caterwauling in my ear, missy!"

The saddle cushion somewhat protected the wench's groin and bottom, though it also angled her bottom upward at an absurd angle, her legs dangling uselessly at either side of the horse.

Wilkes noticed two leather loops on the back legs, identical to the front two. He felt sorry for the dark elf, who was craning her neck to look up at him pitifully, but he also couldn't help but be fascinated. Finally, he was getting to the authentic roots of a provincial religious cult! "Do you want some help tying down her legs?"

All the halflings in the congregation chortled at this. Wilkes looked back and forth from the puppy eyed dark elf to Lady Mother Bridget. He caught a glimpse of the cloaked woman in the corner, casually leaning against the wall and tilting her head in his direction. *"Go on, genius. Use your head!"* she seemed to be telling him, wordlessly.

Wilkes blushed, realizing he was the center of attention. Turning awkwardly to the Lady Mother, he said the first thing that came to mind, trying to sound smart and witty. "Um, I suppose the Goddess doesn't want the wench's legs tied down?"

The halflings all chuckled politely, before Lady Mother Bridget raised her hands for silence, a twinkle in her eye. "Oh, I don't suppose the Goddess minds one way or the other if you tie down her legs. But we generally prefer to keep the wench's legs free."

Wilkes was lost, so lost, that he was finally ready to admit to himself how lost he was.
"...But…why?"

"Because it's funnier when she kicks!"

Wilkes blinked. "Ah…I understand." (He didn't.)

Wilkes raised the birch bundle awkwardly above the ample bottom that represented his target. "Is there something I should say to her?"

Bridget folded her hands sagely, resting on her staff and nodding towards the idol. "Oh, there are a few old saws, but you needn't worry. The Goddess is most pleased when you speak your mind frankly! Try saying whatever pops into your darling, wee head! If that doesn't work, try speaking anyway, and let your heart do the talking for you."

Wilkes grimaced. He had been referring to the dark elf, not the goddess. Part of him felt like he should apologize to her for what he was about to do. He knew the dark elf had consented to enter this life of slavery, but when he looked at her trembling hindquarters, something about the whole situation *felt* wrong. Behind him, he heard a couple halflings in the audience cough awkwardly, and the sound of a cricket chirping.

The nameless temple wench carefully turned her head to catch his eye, so that only he noticed. She desperately mouthed the words: *"Just do it!"*

Wilkes obeyed, bringing the birch bundle down squarely across both her cheeks. With a sharp intake of breath, the wench flinched slightly, turning her face away. Wilkes raised the bundle, and this time only hesitated for half a second, before his heart told him to go for it. He delivered nine more crisp strokes with the birches. One of his lashes was badly aimed, and glanced off the wench's left butt cheek with a scratching sound. Another landed lower than he intended, across her upper thighs. But he was gradually getting the feel for how to aim properly, and discovered how to roll his arm, enjoying the rich, dense "thwack!" that greeted his better strokes.

Although the wench remained silent, she wriggled in place, and grunted. Wilkes was equally impressed by the wench's resolve, and pleased with the knowledge that he was starting to have more of an effect.

The wench might be putting on a bold front, but he could tell by the rising red welts that he was definitely hurting her.

The sadism of this thought gave him pause, before he remembered how high and mighty this same dark elf had acted when she met him at the train station. He put the full force of his arm into the tenth and final spank, and to his delight, the wench kicked her legs and bucked, unable to stop herself from hooting, then hissing as she felt two exposed splinters dug into her thighs on either side of the horse's flanks. "Ooo-hoo-hoo! 'Tch! Aaaah, ha!"

Wilkes heard what sounded like the childish titter of a halfling girl behind him, before remembering he was supposed to say something. But all he felt was terrible. What was he supposed to say after a spanking? “Um…there there. Spanking’s over. Everything will be alright?”

The garage filled with howling laughter. Wilkes spun around, and found the entire audience of halflings slapping their knees and clutching their stomachs, as they laughed their deep, fruity laughs. *“Have they all gone mad?”* thought Wilkes.

“Ha ha! Perfect timing on the delivery!” gasped Sandiman.

“Hoo, hoo! So many layers of irony!” wheezed Lady Mother Bridget.

“Tee hee! Like she’s a little baby!” giggled the little girl.

“Hmm, I should add one like that to my material,” hummed the handsome young halfling man, scratching his pen furiously into his notebook.

The stocky looking older woman sniffed, before her tight lips cracked into a slight smile. “Humph. Not too bad, I suppose…for a first attempt.”

Seeing that their guest of honor was completely lost, Bridget held her hands high to silence the crowd. “Excellent opener, my fellow. You’re not a halfling, so you can’t make an appeal to the goddess, unfortunately, but I know she is well pleased with your efforts, however humble…Good folk, let’s hear it for our guest!”

The room erupted in applause. Instead of clapping her hands, Bridget furiously clapped the wench’s butt cheeks to join in the fun. “And now, for something completely different, I think our guest has earned a little token of gratitude, for such a finely delivered jest! Mr. Wilcock…didn’t you want to interview our spanking wench?”

Wilkes nodded, but Bridget didn’t give him a chance to interrupt her sermonizing. “And didn’t you have an opportunity to interview this wench when she was sent to welcome you to our fair ‘burg?”

“Well, not exactly. I didn’t know she was a spanking wench. I assumed–”

Bridget slammed her staff to the ground, her face grave. “Yes, but that’s not entirely your fault. I’m afraid our errant little temple wench…misrepresented herself. Isn’t that true, you naughty thing?”

The audience gasped. The halfling girl looked at her parents quizzically. “The spanking girl tol’ a lie? Why would she do that? She gets spanked for fibbing!”

Her mother held a finger to her lips to shush her. “Because she’s a silly little elf, who doesn’t know better.”

The wench tapped her feet against the floor, her toes curling and uncurling. “No! I didn’t lie! I only–”

Lady Mother Bridget snapped her holy staff across the wench’s backside. For the first time, Wilkes heard the wench really roar, with all her might. “Argh! Okay, okay, I didn’t tell the whole truth! I lied by omission!”

If the wench hoped that confessing her sin would spare her bottom from further torment, she was immediately disabused of that notion, as Bridget cracked her staff across the wench’s bottom, for the second time. “Indeed! Now, good folk, you are surely wondering: how could he not recognize a spanking wench at a glance?”

Intrigued, the audience nodded, glancing at Wilkes. Even big people weren’t quite that stupid!

Knowing that she had their interest, Bridget gestured to the handyman. “Mr. Sandiman, the evidence, if you please!”

“Oh! Righto! She was wearing this sneaky disguise!” Sandiman pulled the dark elf’s leather motorcycle outfit from his satchel, and held the damning evidence up to the stunned congregation.

Bridget tapped her staff lightly across the wench’s bottom, so that her puppy fat only jiggled slightly. “Wench! Where did you steal this absurd outfit?”

The wench writhed on top of her horse, looking imploringly over either of her shoulders. “I didn’t steal it! I found it–”

The third whack from Bridget’s staff encouraged the wench to rethink her alibi. “Yow! I found it…in the pile of clothes for the donation drive!”

Another snap of the staff left a fresh, reddish mark, which rose to join the previous three glistening welts. The wench tried to jump up off the horse, but her restrained wrists held her upper torso in place. Her legs swung up wildly, the way a falling cat twists its legs in mid-air. The wench’s mewls were equally cat-like. “Myeee–ow! Rawrrrl!!”

As the wench flopped right back down on her spanking horse like an expert, though completely unwilling, rodeo girl, there were fresh giggles at the amusing sight. “Yee-ouwwl! Yes, yes, I stole it! I confess my sin! Please don’t *punish* me! *Baw!!* Boo hoo!”

At the mention of punishment, Bridget grinned like a minx, before landing a fifth lash with her staff. “Punish you? Oh no, of course not! The Goddess is nothing if not forgiving and merciful! Lying may be a grievous sin in the eyes of many of the gods. Perhaps even a sin worthy of eternal damnation for your immortal soul. But, lucky for you, the Goddess isn’t interested in your immortal soul. Just your dumpy ass. Brothers and sisters, it is our duty to guide this foolish creature, until she is safely resting across the loving lap of the Lady! Praise be, for her wisdom!”

The entire congregation answered together: “Praise be, for her mercy!”

Feeling sorry for the wench, Wilkes tried to catch her eye, before he noticed something. Her cries sounded convincing, but her eyes were completely dry. Then he remembered what the woman in the cloak and cowl had said: about the wench being quite an actress. “*She’s nowhere near breaking down?”* thought Wilkes, feeling strangely disappointed.

Bridget turned from her flock to address Wilkes. “Now, as for our guest, since you were so eager to interview our spanking wench, only for her to play her little trick on you, making herself out to be someone special, I think it only just that we give you the opportunity to question this temple wench. Go on, ask her anything. And if she gets tongue tied…” Bridget landed a sixth and final stroke of the staff, aiming it diagonally with such precision, it left a neat tally mark across the previous five welts. “...feel free to give her a good spank, to help loosen her tongue!

Taken by surprise, the wench let out a long, moaning “Ooooh!” and rubbed her feet together. Then, as she felt the sixth welt rise across her other welts, she tried to run away, the balls of her bare feet slipping and squeaking against the smooth stones below her. “Ooo, hoo-hoo-hoo!”

Despite his reservations, Wilkes cracked up at the sight, then looked for his drone. “Really? Thank you, Lady Mother Füdlewhopper! Um, what should I do with the birches? I need both my hands free in case this old camera starts acting up.”

Bridget held out a hand and accepted the birches. “I’m happy to hold them for you. Would you like to try another implement?”

Wilkes swallowed, wondering just how many different implements there could possibly be. “Implements? My, my, I’d love to see them…”

As he stared down at the wench’s already blistered bottom, he had a strange impulse to stroke the rising welts. “...but would it be acceptable for me to use my hand?”

Another round of chuckles rippled through the audience. Lady Mother Bridget wiped a tear from her eye. “Oh my! So simple, and yet so sweet! So elementary, and yet so elegant! Of course you may, and may those great, clumsy hands of yours serve as a gentle, guiding hand to our prodigal wench, leading her back to the Lap of the Lady! While you’re at it, feel free to give her a little massage, to warm her up. Or a good pinch, if she’s cheeky. I find it helps her pay attention.”

Half listening, Wilkes adjusted his drone to capture a perfect shot of the wench, so that her entire body appeared in frame, and moved to the other side of her. He did a double take at the mention of the massage, and stroked the wench's bottom delicately, letting his palm lightly brush against her raised welts. He sensed her shiver at the touch. "Very well, in that case…"

Wilkes landed the first spank, across the wench's left butt cheek. The resounding clap was strangely musical to his ear, and the ripple of the impact almost hypnotic. The wench groaned, but kept silent.

Then Wilkes remembered he was supposed to be conducting an interview. "So! Um…why did you decide to become a spanking wench?"

The wench hissed, then went stubbornly silent. Feeling annoyed, Wilkes clapped the wench's right butt cheek soundly. "Well? You must have had a reason."

With a little "Yip!" of discomfort, the wench hopped in place as she felt the second smack, then wriggled slowly to pull herself away from the splinters that pricked her armpits and lower thighs on either side. "Ooo-wee! Okay, okay! I guess…I was bored?"

Wilkes blinked. "You got bored of being free? So, do you find this…*work* you do…more interesting?"

The wench clenched and unclenched her glutes, giving the illusion that her perky bottom was smiling, then frowning in concentration as she mulled over the question. "Sometimes."

"What was the process like, to become a spanking wench? Did you have to take a test?"

The little girl in the audience snickered at this, but no one else joined in.

The wench sighed, then flashed a boastful stare at Wilkes, as though daring him to challenge her. "After I asked to become a temple wench, I was spanked, paddled, and flogged in myriad creative ways to warn me precisely what I was in for, before I made any commitments. Then I survived a grueling test of skill and endurance, competing against dozens of elves who all desired to enter into voluntary slavery to the halfling temple."

Wilkes scratched his head. "What kind of tests? Do you mean some sort of…gladiatorial combat?"

There were a few scattered laughs. The halfling girl looked at her mother quizzically. "Mommy, are they talking about the reality TV show?"

"Yes dear. The spanking wench meant to say she was on *Who Wants to Be a Spanking Wench?* It was a few seasons ago!"

The halfling girl narrowed her eyes at the spanking wench's upturned bottom, as though expecting her to get a spanking for telling lies. "But…there's no gladiatorial combat on that show. They just spank all the silly elf girls who want to be spanking wenches, and have them recite from the children's catechism. Well, that and the elf girls all say really mean and funny things about each other! Why is she trying to make it sound like it's some sort of sport?"

The girl's mother shrugged, while trying to shush her daughter. "I suppose the wench is playing make believe. She likes pretending to be something she's not."

The halfling girl flashed a toothy grin. "Oh! So, she's not telling lies, just *telling stories*, right? So, is it all right for me to twist the truth a bit, like the spanking wench does?"

The mother beamed, patting her daughter on the head. "Only if you want a spanking, sweetie. Just like the spanking wench gets. Now, shush."

The halflings all giggled as they overheard this exchange, with the exception of the stern, older woman. Famously, halfling parents were widely known to not favor using corporal punishment on children (with rare exceptions), to the point where a halfling parent threatening to spank their child was commonly viewed as an absurdity. Even the little girl joined the laughter, then silently nodded in obedience.

The nameless wench fumed silently as she overheard the crowd poking holes in her story, her face blushing red to match her backside.

Wilkes' mind was reeling. In his futile attempts to find information about the halfling religion online, he'd read something about a televised program, but hadn't been able to find recordings of it anywhere. (In the modern, magical world, there were millions of hours of banal televised programs churned out every year, to the point that finding one show amidst the endless ocean of content was practically impossible.) "So, this…reality show? Lots of dark elves compete?"

The wench seemed to ignore the question, before Wilkes remembered to pat her bottom a few times, half-heartedly. "Huh? Yeah! Mostly dark elves, but even some light elves and wood elves want to enter the service. And, as I said, I beat out all the competition."

The old halfling woman spat, with enough force to knock over a spittoon resting on the opposite side of the room. "For one season, anyway."

Again, the halfling's snickered, and Wilkes understood they were all in on a private joke, and he was the odd man out. "So, does being a spanking–uh, a temple wench–provide meaning to your life? Is it rewarding?"

The wench glared at Wilkes, then turned her face away. "As much as anybody's life has meaning, I suppose. And the job's as rewarding as any other I've ever had."

The stern, old halfling woman scoffed, as if answering Wilke's question herself. "Bah!"

Conscious of the heckler, Wilkes glanced at the congregation, then noticed Bridget pantomiming the act of delivering a spank, as if playing charades. With a nod, Wilkes quickly planted a spank across the center of the wench's bottom, feeling his palm sink into the flabby folds across either side of her butt crack. When the wench didn't so much as twitch, he wanted to kick himself for holding back. "Er, does it pay well?"

"Why, you want to steal my job?" answered the wench sarcastically, without missing a beat.

The crowd tittered at the wench's one-liner. It struck Wilkes that thus far, the audience was reacting to his questions like he was at an open-mic comedy night, not a somber religious ceremony. "Uh, no, don't think I'm qualified. What I mean is this–" Wilkes remembered to deliver a spank, and was pleased to see the wench stiffen, before wagging her buttocks up and down in a delayed response to the pain.

Wilkes smiled, enjoying the view. "Do you really want to be a spanking wench forever? Are there any, well, *promotions* for spanking wenches?"

The wench sniffed, but not to hide any tears. It was with derision. "Of course, I'm here for life. That was a condition of my voluntary enslavement. There's no hierarchy for spanking wenches."

"So, there's no special honors or titles attached to being a spanking wench at, say, the Temple of the High Priestess? Do they–well, if you don't mind my asking–do they get paid more at the bigger temples?" Wilkes heard the older members of the audience titter at this. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed Bridget cross her arms, without laughing, and wondered if he'd just brought up a sore spot.

The spanking wench seemed to relax, sinking onto her bench. "The halflings don't pay us spanking wenches at all, given that we're slaves and all! Though some spanking wenches are 'honored' with a title, like 'Miss Piggy,' or 'Lady Waterworks,' or 'Madame Can-Can.' Those three work at the High Priestess' Temple…"

The wench glanced over her shoulder, looking for Mr. Sandiman, the handyman. When she spotted him, she lifted her bottom and waggled it in his direction, as though daring him to comment. "They even have their own Temple Guards!"

Instinctively, Wilkes spanked the wench three times in quick succession, using his shoulder to put more rolling force into each, left, then right, then center. The wench hummed, then squeaked, then yelped as she felt each reverberating swat. Wilkes paused, then said the first thing that popped into his head. "That's for showing so much cheek."

At this, the audience chuckled politely at this, and even the wench flashed him a smile. "Aw! Have I been acting rude? Are you gonna' *punish* me?"

Wilkes answered by aiming a spank to the spot where the wench's lower right butt-cheek connected to her upper thigh. He enjoyed the sensation as he felt the flabby fold of flesh lift at the impact and bounce back into place.

And as his hand gently caressed the dark elf's warm, buzzing bottom, it occurred to Wilkes that the voluntary slave must have some sort of masochistic streak. Why else would she want to be a spanking wench? Finally, Wilkes let go of all the reservations and guilt he felt before. If she was allowed to enjoy herself, why shouldn't he? "No. It's not my job to *punish* you…"

Wilkes landed a similar stroke to her lower left butt-cheek, discovering a wonderful new rhythm. "It's my job to *interview* you!"

When he landed the third spank across the center of the wench's bottom, Wilkes let his hand rest. As he felt the elf's tender, scorched flesh, he also felt like he finally understood something: he was making an impression. It was as if there was an electric sensation building in the air to greet each tingling thunderclap. He sensed how the lippy wench was now paying full attention to his every word. These halflings had the right idea: spanking this uppity dark elf really worked wonders on her attitude. "Now, getting back to the matter of pay. Since you receive no financial compensation for your service as a spanking wench, I suppose you expect to receive some sort of spiritual, eternal reward from the Goddess. What do you think heaven will be like?"

The wench's bottom trembled beneath his palm. "I…If I remain faithful until the end, I will be welcomed into the heavenly court of the Goddess. Then the Lady of Love, the Lady of Laughter, and the Lady of Lashes will invite me to rest upon her lap."

Wilkes remembered everything he'd read about other provincial religions, and thought he'd heard that sort of thing before. "Aha! She'll sit you on her lap and embrace you, like a loving mother comforting her child. No more tears, no more pain, the end of your long-suffering journey, that sort of thing."

The wench rubbed her feet together, the nylon ropes dangling loosely to match the subtle gesture. "No, I won't be sitting *on* her lap. I won't be sitting at all, actually. I'll be bent *across* her lap…for a spanking, before the whole heavenly host."

"Oh? One last spanking? As a sort of symbolic purification from the sins of the flesh, before you are forgiven and restored to glory?"

The wench glanced nervously over her shoulder, before quickly twisting her head away and hunching her shoulders. "Uh…no, it's not the 'last' spanking. It's only the first spanking. My reward for serving the Lady as a spanking wench, in this life, is to continue serving her as a spanking wench, in the next life, for ever and ever."

There was a dead silence. Wilkes heard a cricket chirping in the garage. “...But…then…why would anyone ever want to be a spanking wench?”

The little girl in the audience cracked up, then started kicking her feet as her laughter built to a crescendo. The musical, child-like quality of the laughter was infectious, and soon the whole congregation was laughing uncontrollably.

Still lost, Wilkes noticed he was still groping the wench and pulled his hand away from her ass with a start. Then he checked his recording drone, remembered he had been recording himself the whole time, and desperately tried to rephrase his question. He hoped if he sounded professional enough now, the footage would seem less embarrassing later. “Ahem! What I mean to say is–well–how is that any different from hell? To be flogged endlessly, for all eternity?”

As the laughter died down, Lady Mother Bridget patted Wilkes’ hand affectionately, as if he was the cutest, slow-witted child she’d ever met, who was also twice her size. “Oh, no, no, dearie, you misunderstand. You’ve not to worry! That’s exactly what every temple wench *wants* for her eternal reward. Of course, none of us know precisely what it will be like in the heavenly chambers. Perhaps our Lady will spend every waking moment, incessantly spanking this poor, silly wench, or perhaps she will allow the saints to chastise her elven wenches on her behalf, as merited by our good works!”

The old halfling woman barked, “Course, it’s not as if our backwater temple wench’s fat ass is all that important in the grand scheme of things.”

Bridget’s face turned red at the mention of the phrase “backwater temple.” “True, Sister Kolhändler, yet we can all take comfort in the knowledge that our lady loves us all, no matter our circumstances or station in life. She even loves her temple wenches…for their spankable little elven bottoms, at least. Well, Master Wilkes, I trust this interview has been most illuminating? Have you any further questions for our asinine wench?”

At the moment, Wilkes only felt like hiding under a rock. “Thank you! I think I’ve taken up quite enough of you good folk’s time. Please, don’t mind me, continue your ceremony. I’ll just…observe, that is, if my presence is, no trouble, of course! Feel free to tell me if I’m–”

Before Wilkes could shuffle back to his spot in the corner, the spanking wench cleared her throat, loud enough to be heard over all the hubbub. “Ahem!”

Slowly, deliberately, teasingly, the spanking wench raised her bottom high into the air, as if asking Wilkes to give it a kiss goodbye. “…Aren’t you forgetting something?”

Remembering he was still recording himself, and wondering what his readers would think of this footage, Wilkes felt his throat go dry. Then he raised his trembling right hand, and brought it down firmly across the wench’s right butt cheek, aiming the slap at a sharper, almost parallel angle across the target. For good measure, he used his left hand to plant another spank, with

slightly more resolve, across the wench's left butt cheek. Finally, feeling all his annoyance at the wench, at the halflings, and at himself for making a fool of him, he decided to take his frustration out on the wench's bottom, since nothing else was at hand. Grabbing her nylon, rope undergarments in one hand, he twisted them in one fist and lifted slightly to pull them into a tight wedgie. The wench cooed as she felt her ass raised higher into the air, then squealed as she felt six fierce swats in quick succession, alternating in sets of three across both of her cheeks in turn. This was followed by another six crisp slaps across her thighs, again in sets of three. Using every ounce of his strength, Wilkes landed a final blow directly across the center of the wench's bottom, and was pleased to see his hand make a rippling impact through the fat meat of her ass, before leaving a vivid imprint in the shape of his hand. The laughter of the halfling congregation was music to his ears, along with the willful wench's warbling wail of pain, as he shuffled back to the corner.

"Hmph. That's more like it. Nice to see he's found a use for those freakishly big hands of his," muttered the elderly merchant lady, who Wilkes now recognized as Sister Kolhändler.

Lady Mother Bridget raised her hands to silence her flock. "Thank you, honored guest. You are unquestionably a not-so-gentle gentleman and a spanking-good scholar. Now, who here wishes to petition our Lady for a boon? Remember, the wench's bottom is here as an offering for us all."

The wench groaned, as if she wasn't too sure she wanted her bottom to be serving such a noble, sanctified function anymore.

Happily ignoring the wench's discomfort, Bridget playfully patted the dark elf's bottom. "Now, let us pray!"

[End of Chapter 2]